

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, TH

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE'S CONVERSATION WITH PRIME
MINISTER ON 31 JANUARY

REFERENCE: BANGKOK 2390

FOR BENSINGER, JENSEN, AND CUSACK ONLY.

1. FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT CONCERNING NARCOTICS MATTERS
FROM A REPORT OF A CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER
KHUKRIT ON 31 JAN.

2. NARCOTICS.

A. I SAID TO THE PRIME MINISTER THAT THE FLOOD OF
OPIATES PASSING THROUGH THAILAND ON THE WAY TO THE UNITED
STATES AND OTHER COUNTRIES WAS A MATTER OF VERY PROFOUND
CONCERN TO THE USG. HEROIN FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA WAS NOW
AVAILABLE IN GREATER QUANTITIES AND IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT
LARGE AMOUNTS WERE ALSO GOING TO EUROPE. I KNEW THAT THAI
GOVERNMENTS HAD BEEN CONCERNED WITH THE OPIUM TRADE FOR
MANY YEARS AND THAT THIS WAS NOT A NEW PROBLEM FOR THEM,

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BUT THE SITUATION APPEARED TO US TO DEMAND A MAJOR EFFORT

ON THE PART OF ALL INTERESTED AGENCIES OF THE RTG. I NOTED THAT WE ESTIMATED THE BURMESE CROP AT BETWEEN 400 AND 450

TONS AND THAT ONLY A VERY SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THIS WAS APPREHENDED IN THAILAND. I ALLUDED TO SECTION 481 OF THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT NOTING THAT THERE WAS UNDERSTANDABLE UNHAPPINESS IN AMERICA AND I BELIEVED IN EUROPE WITH THE APPARENT CASUALNESS WITH WHICH THE THAI VIEWED THIS PROBLEM.

B. THE PRIME MINISTER AGREED WITH THE FOREGOING ANALYSIS AND SAID THAT HE TOO SHARED THE VIEW THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD BECOME RATHER SLACK IN ITS ENFORCEMENT. HE SAID HE WOULD TAKE ACTION ON THIS MATTER RIGHT AWAY AND ASKED FOR SUGGESTIONS WITH REGARD TO MEASURES WHICH SHOULD BE PUT INTO EFFECT.

C. I SAID THAT THERE WERE PROBLEMS IN VIRTUALLY EVERY FIELD BUT THAT TIGHTENING UP CONTROLS AT THE BANGKOK AIRPORT WAS IMPERATIVE. I LEFT A MEMORANDUM WITH HIM SUGGESTING THAT THE SYSTEM OF REWARDS BE REVAMPED, URGING INTERSERVICE COORDINATION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EFFECTIVE INSPECTION SYSTEM, BUT STRESSED THAT THE WHOLE RTG APPARATUS NEEDED PRODDING AND THAT THE ABILITY OF HIGH-LEVEL TRAFFICKERS TO SQUIRM THEIR WAY OUT OF JAIL WAS ONE AREA WHICH PARTICULARLY NEEDED ATTENTION.

D. I SAID THAT WE KNEW THAT U.S PROVIDED HELICOPTERS HAD BEEN USED IN THE PAST TO SMUGGLE NARCOTICS, THAT SEIZED OPIUM AND HEROIN WERE VERY APT TO DISAPPEAR AND THAT THE LARGE PROFITS TO BE MADE IN TRAFFICKING APPEARED TO HAVE SERIOUSLY AFFECTED THE THAI REPRESSIVE APPARATUS. MASTERS AND I PUT IN A KIND WORD FOR GENERAL PHAO SARASIN AND HIS STAFF BUT EMPHASIZED THAT A MULTI-SERVICE EFFORT WAS CALLED FOR.

E. THE PRIME MINISTER ASKED FLAT OUT FOR THE IDENTITIES OF SENIOR MILITARY PERSONNEL WHO MIGHT BE INVOLVED. WE REPLIED THAT WE DID NOT HAVE THE GOODS ON ANY HIGH-RANKING OFFICERS BUT THAT THERE WERE ANY NUMBER OF

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COLONELS AND SUBORDINATE OFFICERS ON THE TAKE. THE PRIME MINISTER REPLIED THAT HE ENJOYED BEING A KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR AND THAT HE WAS EAGER TO ENTER THE BATTLE AGAINST NARCOTICS. HE REPEATED WITH GREAT SINCERITY THAT HE APPRECIATED OUR CANDOR WITH REGARD TO THIS WHOLE QUESTION AND THAT HE WOULD GET ON IT RIGHT AWAY. SISCO

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